

VZCZCXYZ0005
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDG #2131 2551636
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 121636Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9191
INFO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 002131

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [DR](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON LABOR DISPUTE AT HANESBRANDS PLANT IN
BONAO

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 02006

¶1. (U) On September 10, POLOFF called on Washington Gonzalez, the Ministry of Labor's Director General of Labor, to discuss the labor dispute at the TOS Dominicana textile plant in Bonao (owned by the U.S. firm Hanesbrands, Inc.) (Reftel). The Ministry of Labor (SET) is carrying out a verification process to determine if The United Union of TOS Dominicana Workers has been able to achieve the absolute majority required under Dominican law to establish collective bargaining rights.

¶2. (SBU) Gonzalez said that the verification process was to begin later that day. POLOFF encouraged SET to carry out a process that is fair, transparent, and credible. Gonzalez replied that he was committed to the fairest process possible. He said that in the past he had suggested to Hanesbrands that the company not contest the difference between the union membership of, say, 40, 50, or 60 percent. Rather, Gonzalez advised, the firm should learn to live with a union that has demonstrated that its membership constitutes a significant proportion of the plant's workers.

¶3. (SBU) Gonzalez emphasized to POLOFF that he had sent his senior labor inspector to Bonao to handle the verification, and that the other two members of the inspection team were also experienced employees. He said that he had chosen these Santo Domingo-based individuals because of the importance of this labor dispute and because the union had criticized the performance of the Ministry's Bonao inspector. (Note: Gonzalez said that he did not necessarily agree with the criticism of the Bonao inspector, but that he wanted to be responsive to the union.)

¶4. (SBU) Gonzalez also addressed some of the details related to the verification process:

-- He said that he is giving his inspection team the latitude to make decisions on the ground in Bonao. As a result, the team itself will decide how many of the 555 workers that the union claims as members will be interviewed. (Note: Regarding the union's request that its membership list from the date of original filing be used, Gonzalez would not comment specifically; however, he was clearly aware of this issue and of the need to prevent either side from altering their numbers at a later date to prejudice the count.)

-- During interviews with employees to determine whether they are union members, Gonzalez prefers that neither the company nor the union have representatives present. However, if one side requests to be present he must accept, and that would then require that the other side also be present.

-- SET has good information on the total number of workers at

the plant (vice the number of union members), since the company is required to provide this information to the Ministry and has done so on several occasions.

(U) This report and additional information can be found on Embassy Santo Domingo's SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
BULLEN